

Nicky Case/NutcaseNightmare's Flashpoint Answers

Personal History

- Tell me about yourself.
- What Flash games did you make?

Hi! I'm Nicky Case, a.k.a. NutcaseNightmare.

I made that :the game: game. Y'know, the one where you jump off a cliff over and over again in-between sarcastic satires of the world & politics in the mid 00's. There was also an animated Rickroll.

(Since then, other popular games I've made include: Coming Out Simulator, We Become What We Behold, and Adventures With Anxiety. But those are all HTML5.)

● What was your first Flash game that you played, and on what site?

Back when I was 10(?) I got a book from a bookstore about this weird new animation thing called Macromedia Flash. It featured a bunch of animators, including -- if memory serves -- Happy Tree Friends, and Noogy (who later went on to animate Dust: An Elysian Tail).

But among those, the book also mentioned this one sort-of-kind-of-a-game. Well, it was an animation with .gotoAndPlay(); buttons:

JoeCartoon's "Frog In A Blender".

It is an animation-game, on JoeCartoon, about a frog in a blender. The frog makes sarcastic comments at you while you click buttons to make the blender spin faster and faster. The frog keeps insulting you, until the final button, in which the frog turns into a gory red slushie. This kills the frog.

One time I got angry at my grade school teacher, so I made a Flash animation-game inspired by this, and I named it, "[Teacher Name] In A Microwave".

Given that I was growing up in Singapore, I can't believe I somehow got away with it, and not, like, got my ass caned to confetti.

● What are your favorite Flash games? Both massive and obscure.

In no particular order...

N: The Way of The Ninja -- like many folks, I spent *hours* on this, and broke a few keys off my keyboard. In particular, I was amazed by the ragdoll physics in the game, which was uncommon at the time (I think) even for triple-A games. I also appreciated that their website had free trigonometry & code tutorials on how to make game physics like their game. *This game showed me that Flash can be technically stunning.*

Fancy Pants Adventure -- like N, this also had pretty good physics. But what was especially impressive was its animation: not *just* frame-by-frame, but *dynamic*. If you moved right then suddenly moved left, Fancy Pants's sprite wouldn't just suddenly flip horizontally, he'd *actually animate the transition*. To this day that still impresses me. *This game showed me Flash can be technically AND visually stunning.*

The Dead Case -- nothing extraordinary code-wise, but it had a wonderful story with eerie visuals that haunted little-kid-me for weeks. *This game showed me Flash can be a powerful medium for storytelling.*

Dys4ia -- Like The Dead Case, this short game proved the storytelling potential of Flash. But unlike all the other story-games I've seen before, this one was a *personal, memoir-style story*. As its creator, Anna Anthropy, put it herself, she wants mini-games to be like zines: raw, indie, personal. (Also: I did *not* know at the time I first played Dys4ia, but its subject matter, uh, turned out to be way more relevant to my life than I realized.)

● **Overall, what is your favorite part of Flash games, major or minor?**

As mentioned above, it's the raw, indie spirit of the early Flash games. The idea that some random individual -- sometimes a *literal actual teenager*, like I was when I made the :the game: trilogy! -- can make a game or movie that brings joy (and/or horror) to hundreds of thousands. And though we could never do the polish or big-ness of Triple-A, we could do what they couldn't: *be innovative, risky, weird*.

● **What was the first Flash game you released, and on what site? What do you remember about its release?**

Ugh, my first Flash game online? Neither this game nor the site it was shoved upon even exist anymore. The game I made was some buggy, confusing ripoff of Hapland (I don't even remember the title of my game anymore), and I posted it when I was 10(?) 11(?) on SheezyArt, which was "DeviantArt but not".

My earliest game which *still exists* online is Christmas Snake (2006) on Newgrounds. It's an unbalanced high-difficulty Xmas-themed clone of Snake. I'm surprised it didn't get blammed -- but barely. When it was first published, I think its score was ~2.50/5.00 or something.

● **Can you give me just a quick, point-by-point overview of how you developed games? The technical side of things purely - how you program for Flash, how**

you create resources like graphics & sound (if applicable), how functionality improved & things changed in later versions of Flash, anything you can think of that might be noteworthy or interesting to the nerdy-minded.

Technical:

OH HO HO GOD MY CODE WAS SO AWFUL. When I coded :the game:, I didn't know about Arrays. *I didn't know about Arrays.* But because I've copy-pasted code from platformer gamedev tutorials, guess how I "reinvented" Arrays? I drew a row of blocks off-stage, made a "pointer" MovieClip move with `this.x += 1`, and used `.HITTEST();` TO DETECT WHAT BLOCK IT WAS HITTING.

Jesus wept.

Art:

Animated stuff directly in Flash. Used a mouse for years, eventually got a cheap tablet. I have never gotten 100% used to a tablet.

Audio:

I used (and still use) sound effects from [FreeSound.org](https://www.freesound.org). For music, I used to use the Newgrounds Audio Portal and Free Music Archive, but for the 3rd :the game: onwards, I commissioned musicians directly.

For example, for the 3rd and final :the game:, I worked with Peter Gresser! We met because we both got suckered onto doing work "for exposure" for some Australian animated comedy TV pilot which was "Spy vs Spy meets Family Guy". None of us ever got paid from that.

● Did you make games as a hobby, on the side, or a full time job? Did it ever get 'serious', and if so, when?

● What was your first "viral game", what were the circumstances around it, and what was it like inside your head and on your site/portal entry when it did go viral?

I used to make games as a hobby while in high school (to only the mild detriment of my grades). I kept trying my luck, though, entering into as many Flash gamedev contests as I could.

My most humiliating failure was when I entered an ArmorGames contest, which had a sub-category for stick figure games, where the top 4 games would win a prize. Five games were entered, including mine. I did not win a prize.

Eventually, after 5(?) tries at contests, I made & entered :the game: into a MaxGames contest, and won 2nd place -- \$9000! -- but somehow, I won a place in Newgrounds and Flash history.

(I'll admit I sold my soul a bit -- MaxGames liked my game spreading their brand, but uh, "hey Nicky could you remove the :the game: levels that satire religion? Just, uh, y'know, it's the mid-00's internet, could you..." okay fine I did it. But I put all those levels into the 2nd :the game:, which was directly sponsored by Newgrounds.)

(also, an incredibly late confession, but the ATHEISM :THE GAME: level from the 2nd :the game: was a joke directly stolen from Ze Frank's TED Talk. True Facts About The Teenage Nicky Committing Plagiarism.)

● How much did the community support you, and how did they contribute to your success?

Oh the Newgrounds creator community was fantastic. We shared free tutorials, did collabs together, and gave (mostly) constructive criticism to each other.

In particular, I want to thank Tom Fulp. First off, he's actually really nice?! Like, how many founders of big internet sites are *not* sociopaths, let alone legitimately kind and nice? He helped me be financially sustainable back when I was still a teenager, sponsoring :the game: and being very patient (perhaps at his expense) when I missed my promised release date over and over.

Also, I made the original version of Newgrounds' HTML5 Badge system! How about them apples. I hope that it still works, and that there isn't one of my horrible code decisions waiting in there like a time bomb, such as, "using blocks & hitTest instead of Arrays".

The End of Days

● At what point did Flash go into "freefall" in the public consciousness, in your point of view?

Steve Jobs's "Open Letter to Flash".

Yes, he had some good points -- Flash was indeed a battery hog and a security nightmare -- but we all couldn't help but notice how *convenient* it was for the person who profits off the App Stores' games to publicly take down their biggest & free competitor. (Also, Apple promised that HTML5 web games would work, but last I checked, Mobile Safari refused to JIT-compile JavaScript (which most modern browsers do), making HTML5 games unplayable in mobile browsers.)

● What have you been up to since Flash left the public consciousness?

I've been making games / "web interactives" in HTML5! They're mostly educational -- my most recent one was a collaboration with an epidemiologist, to teach the basic mathematical models from Epidemiology 101, and previously I've made games/explorables about game theory, anxiety disorder, queer issues, and political polarization.

"ARE YOU NOT EDUTAINED?"

● **Speaking of recapturing the magic, how do you feel about HTML5 games today?**

Oh I make HTML5 games now. What other cowboy is there in town for web games? (Well, I guess Unity & Godot, but those ultimately still have to export to HTML5)

Making HTML5 games is... okay. It's a *much* higher learning curve than Flash was. Even 11 years after Jobs's "Open Letter To Flash", in my opinion, there's *still* no tool as beginner-friendly as Flash for all-in-one animating & coding a web game. With Flash, you could get started with simple buttons and `.gotoAndPlay()`; and make a full point-and-click-adventure like The Dead Case, or Breaking The Bank, Impossible Quiz, and countless other loveable classics.

● **Are you still using Flash for anything in particular today?**

Adobe Flash has been rebranded as Adobe Animate, and I still use it to make movies & game sprites! Partially out of nostalgia, and partially because keyboard shortcuts & UI layout is a pain to re-learn.

● **How can we play your games now that Flash has been exorcised from most browsers?**

Well, Flashpoint. ;)

● **If you could do it all again, would you?**

Yup. <3